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ABSTRACT

This report presents theories in counseling not merely as abstract thoughts, but as beliefs and proposed procedures to follow in helping a client when he/she has difficulties coping with life. Four main counseling theories are then described: (1) Client-Centered Counseling (Carl Rogers); (2) Rational-Emotive Therapy (Albert Ellis); (3) Reality Therapy (William Glasser); and (4) Behavior Modification (B. F. Skinner, William Glasser). Counselors are advised to decide on one of these theories and to test it to see how effective they are in helping clients. It is noted that, with experience, counselors will integrate other theories and ideas to renew their approach and to become effective counselors. The idea of relevancy of theory to a nontraditional client is explained. This paper ends with a mini-practicum approach to the application of theory and practice. Eight case studies are presented which counselors can use to study the problems, select counseling procedures, reflect on situations, and synthesize into a personal philosophy of counseling. Suggestions for becoming an effective counselor are given. The eight case studies are appended. (NB)

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THEORIES OF COUNSELING:
THEIR RELEVANCY TO NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

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Theories of Counseling:
Their Relevancy to Non-Traditional Students

Introduction

One might think that theories are abstract thoughts, but, in counseling, theories are beliefs and proposed procedures to follow in helping a client when he or she has difficulties in coping with life. At this conference, I will hand out a chart with nine counseling approaches but will comment mainly on four theories: Client-Centered Counseling, Rational-Emotive Therapy, Reality Therapy and the Behavior Modification Approach.

1) Client-Centered Counseling (Rogers)

Carl Rogers, in arriving at his personalized theory of counseling, had to reject the belief that the nature of man was irrational, unsocialized, and self-destructive in his approach to life. In his struggle to synthesize his theory, he concluded that in order to help people in their difficulties, he should believe in the dignity and worth of the individual, that the individual's behavior is based on self-perception, that the individual tends toward self-actualization and that people are basically good and trustworthy. Rogers is highly humanistic in his approach to counseling. For him, an effective counselor:

--is genuine and not phony or defensive,

--is able to provide a non-threatening, secure atmosphere through acceptance of the client,

--is able to understand and have a high degree of empathic understanding.

(Theory, Methods, and Process of Counseling and Psychotherapy, Rickey L. George and Therese Stridde Cristiani, 1981, P. 63, 64, 149)

2) Rational-Emotive Therapy (Ellis)

According to Albert Ellis, "the rational-emotive view of people is dominated by the principle that emotion and reason--thinking and feeling--are intricately entwined in the psyche...To understand self-defeating behavior, one must understand how a person feels, thinks, perceives, and acts." (P. 88, George) So the rational-emotive therapist must keep in mind:

--that the individual is uniquely rational and irrational,

--that the individual's emotional and psychological disturbance is the result of irrational and illogical thinking,

--that irrational thinking originates in early illogical learning,

--that "the disturbed individual perpetuates the disturbance, maintaining illogical behavior by internal verbalizations of irrational ideas and thoughts." (P. 89, George)

--that "individuals have vast untapped resources for actualizing their potentials and can change their personal and social destinies." (P. 89, George)

Ellis also believes the individuals can change their self-defeating tendencies. Therefore, he recommends that negative, self-defeating thoughts and emotions must be eliminated so that thinking becomes logical and rational.

3) Reality Therapy (Glasser)

According to William Glasser, the author of Reality Therapy, the key concept in helping a disturbed client is the belief that behavior disorders are the direct result of irresponsibility on the part of the client. Furthermore, he suggests that the counselor should focus on the present behavior rather than on the

past. According to him, the individual's past is fixed and should be ignored. The past is discussed only when it relates to current behavior. He also emphasizes the need of the client to make his own judgments in view of possible behavior modification by confronting rather than avoiding reality. (P. 119, George)

4) Behavior Modification (Skinner, Glasser)

Behavior Modification is the least recommended theory but has its therapeutic value in the obtaining of short-term goals. According to its proponents, a counselor should focus on:

--overt and specific behavior

--a precise setting of treatment goals

--formulating specific treatment procedures for the particular problem

--an objective test of the outcome of therapy. (P. 111, George)

I am not implying that you (the reader) will be forming a decisive theory from these four approaches to counseling because there are many more theories. But it is advisable that you first decide on one of these theories and test it for yourself to see how effective you are in helping the client. Then, as you continue as a practitioner, you will see the need of integrating other theories and ideas in order to constantly renew your approach and become an effective counselor. Remember that counseling is an art and it takes a great deal of time to develop that art. Also remember that the client population is a changing entity. For instance, I believe that the freshmen college students of today are more sophisticated, more mature and more

tolerant of themselves, and of me as a counselor than the students I counseled 10 or 15 years ago. Because of that fact, it is imperative that we become more knowledgeable and sophisticated in current research and approaches to helping modern youth.

The idea expressed in the title of relevancy of theory to a non-traditional student or client needs clarification. I submit that all of the theories of counseling are relevant to all clients as we consider them in their human behavior as simply "having difficulty with living". The problem arises when the counselor, in his process of helping the client, selects and integrates the theory to be applied to a specific situation or when the ethnicity of the counselor biases him/her in thinking that because he/she is of the same ethnic group, only he can be effective with that counselee. Rather, I believe that we can effectively counsel both non-traditional and traditional students because we are well versed in current theories of counseling, can follow procedures and systems, are able to adapt and integrate new ideas and, most of all, can be keen observers of human behavior. Our ethnicity ought to be considered only a minor advantage at some times and in some situations.

The next phase of my persentation will be a mini-practicum approach to the application of theory and practice. We will be taking the approach of Robert Carkhuff in his work, The Art of Helping. Out of my personal files, I brought eight cases which I will hand out. You will divide up in four groups and each will

be given two cases. You will study the problems, select the counseling procedures, reflect on the situations and, if you can, synthesize them into your personal philosophy of counseling as you deal with these problems. In fifteen or twenty minutes we will return to this room and, as time allows, you will share your comments and/or your philosophy of counseling.

Conclusion

In becoming an effective counselor, you need to:

--be flexible according to the situation,

--change by renewing yourself through the evidence of new research and by testing new hypotheses,

--place less emphasis on ethnicity but rather be a keen observer of human behavior,

--practice the art of counseling as you are molding students to become self-actualized, more rational, more realistic, and more success-oriented.

To further assist you, I am available for consultations or as a conference speaker when needed or requested.

Note enclosed materials that were used:

--The 8 cases or excerpts used in discussion groups.

--A chart of comparison of nine counseling approaches (not enclosed) was also given to the groups.

--The chart was taken from the book, Fundamentals of Counseling, by Bruce Shertzer and Shelley C. Stone, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Second Edition, 1974, P. 242, 243.

This paper was prepared for presentation at the University of Wisconsin System's Fifth Multicultural Conference, held October 24-25, 1985, in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Excerpt 1

Counselee: A freshman student came in with a problem to see the counselor. He began by saying that he hated his math teacher, that he could not understand him, and that he was failing the course. By inquiring into the nature of the problem the counselor discovered that the student's background in math was very poor (ACT .02). The truth of the matter was that the student was not spending time on math.

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 2

Counselee: A sophomore student walked into her counselor's office, closed the door and said, "Today I'm not talking about academic problems. This weekend I have to make a decision. I have to decide whether to have an abortion or not before it's too late. I cannot tell my parents about this. Because of having this problem on my mind, I'm getting behind in my studies."

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 3

Counselee: A junior student received her first notification of being on academic probation. She came to the office and said that she must get two "B's" and two "C's" this semester to get off probation. She said this semester's courses are not going very well. She's having problems with motivation and is becoming overly anxious and afraid of failure, and consequently academic dismissal.

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 4

Counselee: I don't know if I am right or wrong feeling the way I do. But I find myself withdrawing from people. I don't seem to socialize and play their stupid little games any more. I get upset and come home depressed and have headaches. It all seems so superficial. There was a time when I used to get along with everybody. Everybody said, "Isn't she wonderful. She gets along with everybody. Everybody likes her." I used to think that was something to be really proud of, but that was who I was at that time. I had no depth. I was what the crowd wanted me to be--the particular group I was with.

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 5

Counselee: Gee, those people! Who do they think they are? I just can't stand interacting with them anymore. Just a bunch of phonies. They leave me so frustrated. They make me so anxious. I get angry at myself. I don't even want to be bothered with them anymore. I just wish I could be honest with them and tell them all to go to hell! But I guess I just can't do it.

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 6

Counselee: Mr. Bush's history lectures are so boring that Tony has a hard time staying awake in the afternoon class. Although Mr. Bush obviously knows what he is talking about, he is more a historian than a teacher. Much of the time he reads from his notes or the text and seldom permits questions. Yesterday, Tony inadvertently discovered that Professor Bush does not record or require attendance and that many students pass his examinations by simply reading on their own. Tony decided to try this approach.

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 7

Counselee: Jeff is having more trouble with his freshman English class than he expected. In fact, after almost two months, the instructor has told him that he is a borderline case and might fail unless he can devote more time to the subject and get some free tutoring at the campus learning center. As a result of the conference, Jeff has decided to drop English.

Counselor's Response:

Excerpt 8

Counselee: Student is having difficulty concentrating and managing his time. His mid-term reports show inconsistent attendance and poor grades. The student comes in to speak with his counselor, and tells the counselor, "My parents are going through a very nasty divorce, and they have put me right in the middle of it; I don't know what to do. I find myself not wanting to go home, and I don't answer my telephone, for fear it may be one of them."

Counselor's Response: